

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0657

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT ECON IZ
SUBJECT: SADDAM HUSSEIN CRITICIZES BUREAUCRATIC APPLICATION
OF SOCIALISM

1. SUMMARY: IRAQI STRONGMAN SADDAM HUSSEIN HAS GIVEN
WIDELY PUBLICIZED ADDRESS BEFORE A SYMPOSIUM HELD BY THE
STATE ORGANIZATION FOR CONSUMER GOODS IN WHICH HE
CRITICIZED IDEOLOGICALLY RIGID AND BUREAUCRATIC MEASURES
WHICH HAVE LED TO SHORTAGES IN THE MARKETPLACE. SPEECH
WAS BLUNT IN TONE AND HIGHLY CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT
EMPLOYEES WHO MADE UP BULK OF THE AUDIENCE. SPEECH
REVEALED SADDAM HUSSEIN'S PRAGMATIC SIDE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN APRIL 14 SPEECH DISCUSSING DISTRIBUTION PROBLEMS
IN CONSUMEE GOODS ORGANIZATIONS, HUSSEIN WAS CAREFUL
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TO SAY THAT THE PROBLEM DID NOT LIE WITH THE SOCIALIST
PRINCIPLES OF THE BAATH PARTY, WHICH ARE INDISPUTABLY
VALID, BUT WITH THEIR APPLICATIONS, WHICH ARE
SUBJECT TO POPULAR APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE. HE SAID
THAT SOME OFFICIALS HAD COMMITTED "NATIONAL BETRAYAL"
EITHER INTENTIONALLY OR UNINTENTIONALLY. THEY
HAD NOT SHOWN THE FLEXIBILITY THAT SHOULD BE PART OF

THEIR EXPERTISE AS ECONOMIC SPECIALISTS, AND THEY WILL BE PUNISHED. "UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD THE DESTINIES OF THE PEOPLE BE PLACED IN THE HANDS OF INCAPABLE PERSONS." WE UNDERSTAND THAT PRESIDENT OF STATE ORGANIZATION FOR CONSUMER GOODS IS NOW ON MISSION IN CHINA AND WILL PROBABLY LOSE HIS JOB WHEN HE RETURNS.

3. HUSSEIN SAID THAT HE HAD RECENTLY EXAMINED COMPLAINTS ABOUT RETAIL TRADE WITHIN THE SOCIALIST SECTOR BY TALKING WITH A CROSS SECTION OF CRAFTSMEN WHO HAD BEEN UNABLE TO OBTAIN THE ARTICLES THEY WANTED FOR CARRYING OUT THEIR WORK. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT JUST PRIOR TO THE SPEECH USINT OFFICER SAW LONG QUEUE OF WORKERS AT A SPECIAL EXHIBITION OF THE BAGHDAD INTERNATIONAL FAIR AND LEARNED THAT THEY WERE LINED UP TO PURCHASE HAND TOOLS. IRAQI LOCAL IN COMMERCIAL SECTION STATES THAT ORDERS HAVE NOW GONE TO WESTERN EUROPEAN FIRMS FOR PURCHASES OF HAND TOOLS ON URGENT BASIS.

4. SPEECH IMPLIED THAT TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR SOME OF THE SOCIALIST EXPERIEMENTS. "WE HAVE SAID OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT THE STATE MUST NOT BE REDUCED TO RETAIL SHOPS. RETAIL BUSINESS SHOULD BE ASSIGNED TO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SUBJECT TO CENTRAL LAWS AGAINST MANIPULATIONS AND IRREGULARITIES." HUSSEIN MADE CLEAR THAT THIS WAS AN ORDER AND NOT SIMPLY A THEORETICAL PROPOSAL.

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5. ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POPULAR DESIRES AND SOCIALIST MEASURES, HUSSEIN INSISTED THAT THE STATE FOLLOW A PRAGMATIC COURSE. "WE TOLD THE OFFICIALS WHO WERE IN OUR COUNTRY THAT IN CASE THE PEOPLE DISLIKED A CERTAIN FORMULA OF THE SOCIALIST APPLICATION, SUCH A FORMULA SHOULD BE DROPPED... THE POLICY OF THE REVOLUTION IS BUT A REFLECTION OF THE CONSCIENCE OF THE PEOPLE AND THE NEEDS FELT BY THE PEOPLE." IN A THEORETICAL VEIN, HUSSEIN ARGUED THAT BAATHI SOCIALISM IS NOT AN ABSTRACT THEORY BUT A DEVELOPING BODY OF PRACTICES.

6. COMMENT: HUSSEIN'S SPEECH REFLECTS BASIC THEMES OF LAST YEAR'S PRODUCTIVITY CAMPAIGN. IN ESSENCE IT IS A POLITICAL AND PRAGMATIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE SAD SHAPE OF THE CONSUMER MARKETPLACE IN IRAQ. IRAQIS HAVE A RISING PER CAPITA INCOME, BUT THE SUPPLY OF CONSUMER PRODUCTS OF ALL KINDS REMAINS INADEQUATE, AND THESE SHORTAGES ARE, NO DOUBT, A CAUSE OF CONSIDERABLE POPULAR DISCONTENT. THE REGIME HAS ALWAYS BEEN PREPARED

TO JUSTIFY THE LACK OF MIDDLE-CLASS LUXURY ITEMS BY
REFERENCE TO ITS SOCIALIST IDEOLOGY. BUT SHORTAGES OF
HAND TOOLS, SPARE PARTS, MATERIALS AND OTHER ITEMS
NEEDED BY IRAQI WORKERS ARE IN GROSS CONFLICT WITH
SADDAM HUSSEIN'S STRESS ON PRODUCTIVITY.
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